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R 211510Z MAY 08  
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9303  
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1192  
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 0230

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 001035

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LONDON PASS TO DAN SREEBNY, DUBAI PASS MICHAEL PELLETIER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/21/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KPAI](#) [EG](#)  
SUBJECT: MOI DISCUSSES EGYPTIAN MEDIA REGULATION

REF: CAIRO 397

Classified by Ambassador Margaret Scobey for reason 1.4 (b)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. During Ambassador Scobey's May 13 introductory call on Information Minister Anas Al Fekki, the much-criticized Minister indicated he plans to vigorously enforce the Arab League's Broadcast TV "code of ethics," that he and his Saudi counterpart spearheaded several months ago at an Arab League Meeting, and possibly extend it to the print media (reftel). While stating that political sensitivities and potential street reaction inhibit their ability to shut down Hezbollah's Al Manar Satellite TV, which broadcasts via Arabsat and Nilesat, he said that he would raise the inflammatory pro-resistance channel Al-Rafidein with Director of Egyptian Intelligence Omar Suleiman. The Ambassador informed him of Al Hurra's plan to broadcast a daily three-hour program out of Cairo, to which Al Fekki raised no objection. END SUMMARY.

#### AL MANAR AND BROADCAST ETHICS

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¶2. (C) Referring to the Ambassador's own bad experiences with the print media, Al Fekki said that he intended to enforce the Arab League's code of ethics on the Broadcast media to ensure "responsible" reporting. The Ambassador asked Al Fekki whether Al Manar, the vehicle for Hezbollah which had turned its guns on the Lebanese government and people and had burned down Future TV, had not broken the Arab League's TV Broadcasting Code and its prohibition on threatening the peace among Arab countries. Claiming that he had no use for either Hezbollah or Shi'ites, Al Fekki said that much as he would like to shut down the station, the matter was "too politically sensitive". Hezbollah and its leader Hassan Nasrallah enjoyed too much popularity among the Egyptian people, the Minister stated.

¶3. (C) Repeating the argument familiar from previous demarches against Al Manar, he said: "We must find a specific reason to shut it down." So far, he said, Al Manar had cleverly avoided messages that directly threatened the security of either Egypt or Saudi Arabia, the hosts of Arabsat and Nilesat. When the Ambassador responded that Hezbollah turning its guns on the Lebanese people seemed sufficient cause, the Minister suggested that she raise the matter with Arab League General Secretary Amre Moussa.

#### AL RAFIDEIN AND AL QAEDA

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¶4. (C) The Minister was more accommodating on Al Rafidein. The Ambassador pointed out that the channel, which is financed by Sheikh Hareth Al Dari of the Council of Ulema, openly encourages the killing of American and Iraqi soldiers. He promised to consult the Ministry's monitors as well as EGIS Director Omar Suleiman. Al Fekki took credit for taking Al Zawra, a similar channel that promotes killing US troops, off Nilesat last year.

TIME TO GO AFTER PRINT JOURNALISTS

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¶5. (C) The Minister indicated that he is working on a new set of guidelines to enforce "responsible journalism" on broadcast TV, and possibly the "irresponsible" print press. He said there were five Islamist channels that the Ministry had its eye on closing. "I am against sending them to prison or the courts," he said, but he indicated that the independent and opposition newspapers too had gone too far and needed additional controls. The Ambassador took issue with these curbs, arguing that the best restraint on journalists who print falsehoods and distortions are responsible journalists who expose them.

NEW AL HURRA SHOW

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¶6. (U) The Ambassador also raised Al Hurra's intention to launch a new daily current events and cultural program that would broadcast three hours a day from Egypt. Al Fekki was non-committal, but agreed to look at al Hurra's proposal to the State Information Service, charged with accrediting foreign journalists in Egypt.  
SCOBAY